

issued a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the U.S. portion of this system (FERC/EIS-0132D), in conjunction with applications for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for an interstate pipeline and for a Presidential Permit for an international border crossing by North Baja Pipeline, LLC. That EIS discusses the emissions from electric generating facilities which will receive gas from the system. These include seven other individual units, in addition to the TDM, EBC, and EAX export units. Also discussed are impacts to vegetation and wildlife (including the flat-tailed horned lizard and burrowing owl), land use and visual resources, among others. NBP, LLC has recently submitted information in the FERC proceeding projecting that existing sources of air emissions in Mexico will switch from more polluting fuels to natural gas after the new pipeline system is in place, resulting in improved air quality in the U.S. (see Appendix E).

4.12.4 Other Cumulative Impacts – Project Area

In the Yuha Desert east of the Westside Main Canal, there are a number of activities that take place on a more or less continuing basis that may have impacts on environmental resources, particularly cultural and biological resources. These activities include legal and illegal off-road activities, Border Patrol activities, potential disturbance offered by the presence of access by way of SR-98, California Department of Transportation maintenance of SR-98, and camping and recreational uses. There are also two sand and gravel extraction sites near SR-98 leased from the BLM by the County of Imperial, although no active extraction is being conducted.

All of these activities have the potential to adversely affect plants and wildlife in the Yuha Desert area, and some may also have the potential to directly or indirectly adversely affect cultural resources. All may also contribute to adverse effects on environmental resources by increasing human presence and activity, and the potential for access to undisturbed or sensitive areas, in the area. Although the direct effects of the proposed project on biological and cultural resources could be mitigated by the measures recommended in this EA, incremental contributions to the kind of cumulative impacts herein described appear to be unavoidable. Because of the geographic attributes of the area involved, and in some cases the legal entitlement to continue the contributing activity, it appears that full avoidance or even specific measures for fully effective mitigation of the adverse effects are not available or possible.

4.13 Summary

Sempra Energy Resources and Baja California Power, Inc. propose to construct two double-circuit, 230 kV transmission lines between the Imperial Valley Substation and the international border for the purpose of importing electrical power generated in Mexico into the United States. In order to implement the project, SER and BCP would require the approval of Presidential permits by DOE to allow the international border crossing by

the transmission lines and the grant of two 120-foot-wide rights-of-way leased by BLM for construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed lines. The federal actions, if approved by DOE and BLM, would allow implementation of the following four components, which constitute the proposed project:

- The construction, operation, maintenance, and connection of a double-circuit, 230-kV transmission line between the U.S./Mexico international border and the SDG&E Imperial Valley Substation by Sempra Energy Resources.
- The construction, operation, maintenance, and connection of a double-circuit, 230-kV transmission line between the U.S./Mexico international border and the SDG&E Imperial Valley Substation by Baja California Power, Inc.
- Relocation of six poles of the existing SDG&E 230 kV, single-circuit transmission line. The portion proposed to be relocated is that portion of the line immediately adjacent to the Imperial Valley Substation.
- Relocation of two poles of an existing 230-kV, single-circuit transmission line owned and operated by the Imperial Irrigation District near the Imperial Valley Substation.

In Chapter 4 of this EA, the environmental consequences of the proposed federal actions and the consequent implementation of the proposed project are evaluated and explained. Environmental protection measures that the applicants have committed to implement are listed in Section 2.2.6 of this EA. Mitigation measures committed to by the applicants are designed to protect biological, cultural, and paleontological resources. Impacts requiring mitigation on land use; air quality; geology, soils, and seismicity; visual resources; paleontological resources; and socioeconomics are not anticipated. The proposed project would not result in: irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources, short-term benefits at the expense of long-term environmental degradation, or conflict with the intent of any Executive Orders relative to NEPA compliance.

The benefits of the proposed project would be substantial. The project, if approved and built, would substantially reduce the critical energy shortage being experienced by California and other western states. The transmission lines proposed by SER and BCP are intended to make power generated from the TDM and LRPC electrical generating facilities located in Mexico available to California consumers. Both transmission lines would benefit the public by improving the region's ability to meet current and future energy demands. The public would benefit from the construction of the transmission lines because the added power supply would increase energy transfer capability and system reliability and would reduce the region's dependence on other, less efficient generation.